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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

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South Central District Health Reports Confirmed Pertussis Case

South Central District Health is reporting a laboratory confirmed case of pertussis in a 5-week-old Twin Falls child. This child is enrolled in a childcare facility and parents of children who have been in close contact with the child have been advised to seek medical attention and preventive antibiotic treatment for their child(ren).

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a highly contagious vaccine preventable disease. Pertussis is spread person to person through the air from an infected person during coughing, sneezing or talking. Pertussis begins with cold-like symptoms and a cough that becomes progressively worse over 1 to 2 weeks and can last up to 10 weeks. Coughing usually happens in long bouts, sometimes followed by a whooping noise and the person may vomit or cough up clear mucus. Pertussis is a vaccine preventable disease, although immunity from the vaccine may decrease after the last recommended vaccination at kindergarten age. Pertussis may occur among individuals of any age although the reservoir for the disease is usually older people. Pertussis illness, however, is more serious in infants and young children.

You are urged to check your children's immunization records to be sure they have received all their shots. If you are unsure if your children are completely immunized, you should contact their primary care provider or South Central District Health at 734-5900. A new pertussis vaccine called Boostrix formulated specifically for 11- to 18-year-olds is now available through private providers. Another new pertussis vaccine formulated for 11- to 64-year-olds is expected to be available through SCDH before school starts in late August.

Antibiotics can make the disease milder in those infected and will prevent transmission of the illness to others. Most fully immunized school children are at low risk for contracting pertussis. However, individuals exposed to pertussis through close contact to a symptomatic person should also be given antibiotics to prevent the disease, even if they were vaccinated.

Physicians are advised to have a high index of suspicion when evaluating patients with a prolonged cough illness.

For more information, contact Karin Frodin, R.N., South Central District Health Epidemiologist, at 737-5974.

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